

## RUSSIA AND THE WEST IN IRAN

The second British mission to Turkestan was smaller and experienced hazardous, though romantic, adventures comparable to the Wassmuss' exploits in southern Iran<sup>13</sup> or—to a lesser degree—to

T. E. Lawrence's activities in Arabia. It was led by three officers: Lt.-Colonel F. M. Bailey, Lt.-Colonel P. T. Etherton, and Major L. V. S. Blacker, all of whom had expert knowledge of Central Asia and its languages. Its destination was Tashkent, the hotbed of Bol-shevism. "We were to investigate the situation on the spot," writes

Colonel Etherton, "and examine questions affecting the safety and welfare of the British Empire. . . . We were also to initiate and put into effective operation a system of propaganda. . . ."<sup>14</sup>

A staff of sixteen noncommissioned officers, mostly linguists and telegraph operators, accompanied the officers. Organized in India, the mission had to reach Tashkent by a difficult route through the Hunza principality on the border of the Pamir Plateau, Chinese Turkestan, and Kirghizia. Upon their arrival in Sin-Kiang Colonel Etherton parted with the mission owing to his appointment as Consul-General in Kashgar. His place as leader of the mission was taken by Sir George Macartney, who had been occupying the position to which Colonel Etherton was being transferred.

Arriving by rail via Andijan in Tashkent, the mission was at pains to explain to the surprised Soviet commissars that its intentions were peaceful and friendly. This explanation did not seem convincing to the Bolsheviks, who hesitated between putting the British party before a firing squad and holding them as hostages. The greatest source of embarrassment to the mission was, of course, the

military operations simultaneously undertaken in  
Transcaspia by  
General Malleson against the Soviet troops. The  
Macartney mission  
therefore felt it necessary to pretend that the Indian  
troops in Trans-  
caspia "were not His Majesty's troops at all, but  
pensioners and  
discharged Hazaras, Afghan subjects," <sup>17</sup> for whose  
behavior the  
British authorities could not be held responsible. It is  
really puzzling  
that the Bolsheviks permitted the mission to sojourn  
in Tashkent  
for three months, especially since after Ambassador  
Mirbach's mur-

<sup>15</sup> See Chapter Six.

<sup>16</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. i ff.

<sup>17</sup> Blacker, *op. tit.*,  
p. 24.